

Feminismo vs Feminism

By Tom Robbins

A year has passed and many breezes have blown through the hole in the donut since *The Seattle Weekly* published Jane Adams's brilliant essay, "Don't Throw Out the Sex with the Sexism," an article that snapped the shutter on the priggish anti-eroticism of certain overreacting feminists. Adams isolated the germ, but her diagnosis unfortunately produced no cure, and the pimples of excess that Adams identified as prude rash have metastasized.

Well, as the Tao teaches, all things have a tendency to turn into their opposites, and it should come as no large surprise that the soft nurturing yin of feminismo is appropriating the harsh yang of machismo. Feminismo. It's a rat bite in the heart to observe the deformation of what might have been the most important socio-spiritual awakening in two thousand years.

The re-emergence in the modern world of the feminine archetype the recognition in our times of the Goddess, the Great Mother was such a benevolent and auspicious moonrise that it illuminated in a special way the working philosophies of thousands of happy people. Alas, mother consciousness, as a movement, degenerated even quicker than drug consciousness, as a movement. The lesson, of course, is that movements are for Beethoven and the bowels; that the stuff of higher consciousness is pretty much confined to the individual spirit, and that the individual spirit is murdered by organization.

What has turned feminism into feminismo, what has changed an enlightened effort to reduce bias and repression into a witch hunt (Burn the sexist! Ban Pretty Baby!) is politics. Politics long ago ruined government, making good government practically impossible anywhere on earth. Politics has assaulted the arts, winning total victories in places such as China and Russia where creativity has been usurped for propaganda. Politics has tainted sports: consider the last two Olympic Games. And now politics is zeroing in on sex. In contemporary China,

eroticism is considered disgusting. Among young liberals it is considered sexist.

The last time I was called a sexist was on June 3 at the Paramount Theater. I'd been asked to emcee a benefit for the Crabshell Alliance, a service I had performed previously for another anti-nuclear coalition in Bellingham. Amateur though I am, I did fine in Bellingham. In Seattle, well, let's say that a significant portion of the audience had little concern about the consequences of nuclear radiation for the very good reason that it was already mutated. The effects of yelling "boogie" too loud and too often while full of bad booze does hideous things to the brain. But that's another story.

In the course of the concert, I told a few jokes. Yes, they were bad jokes. I happen to have a theory about the aesthetic virtues of bad jokes. I won't go into that here because 1, it's too irrelevant, and 2, it's probably wrong. I, too have done a lot of yelling while full of odd liquids and its taken its toll.

The jokes, sexual in content as many if not most jokes are, elicited boos and catcalls well beyond the exaggerated groans that bad jokes are supposed to draw. Later on, backstage, I was accosted by a member of the Crabshell Alliance, masculine, sincere and self-righteous; he was striving to be even in tone but exhaling bad vibes like a herpetological halitosis. He said he and "many others" were offended by my sexism.

Okay, let's have a look at my sexism-not that it should make a damn to you whether I am innocent or guilty, because it may offer some clue to who or what has been siphoning the gas tank of heterosexual relations.

Exhibit A: What is white and crawls up your leg? Answer: Uncle Ben's perverted rice. (Groan.) Where is the sexism, Mr. Crabshell? If I had said "Ann Page's perverted rice" would you have considered me an equal-opportunity comedian? If I had said "long brown" instead of white, would I have been less-or more-of a racist?

The fact is, Mr. Crabshell was confused. Confused about what is sexual and what is sexist. Confused about what is the sweet heat of existence and what is dull and rigid dogma. He's not alone. When he said that "many others" found me offensive, I believed him. These days, the androids are everywhere.

Hip yet straight, committed yet dispassionate, young yet old, androids may be further indentified by the complete absence of playfulness with which they approach everything, including play. Wearing their flannel shirts, petting their big dogs, while intently trying to decide what wine to bring on their next backpacking trip, the androids have brought feminism the same sour up-tightness that they inflict on every issue from marijuana, (they favor discreet use of grass, are scared witless of LSD) to ecology (they support the Sierra Club, are a bit unnerved by Green Peace). Hey, androids! The Great Mother has asked me to warn you that if you don't loosen up, in your heads and in your loins, she's gonna take your ten-speeds away.

In all fairness, the feminist movement was already up to its knees in sour owl droppings before the androids came aboard. A major cause was politics. What had begun as a liberation movement which is to say, a spiritual movement, since true freedom can only come from within, swiftly lost ecstatic voltage when it was taken over by secular forces, as spiritual movements invariably are. Organized politics did to feminism what organized religion did to Christianity: corrupted it, compromised it, replaced white magic with black magic.

Freud said that our emotional problems are the result of inadequately developed sexuality. Jung said they are the result of inadequately developed spirituality. What we've learned since Freud and Jung is that at the purer levels sexuality and spirituality are virtually the same. Since feminism is horribly deficient both sexually and spiritually its neurosis is flapping like a tattered flag.

Holden flower buds in the individual soul. Spiritual /or a spontaneously unfolding awakening rather than a consciously organized movement. It's easy, then, to see how politics toppled feminism from its spiritual foundation. But what happened to its innate sexuality? Several things. One is that as it evolved into a political movement, feminism started attracting damaged goods:

unfortunate women whose psyches had been cracked by traumatic encounters with father, brothers, or boy playmates-people who, lacking the inner resources to mend themselves, degenerated into angry avengers. It is these women who have knit with dark yarns the fringe of bitterness, hysteria, and cruelty that feminism now wears.

Another thing is that the aggressive assertive, competitive, egoistic, and generally insensitive manner in which most men approach sex has so disappointed and frightened women that many of them have abandoned romance. Abandoned romance, not sex. They still participate in the physical act, but only on their own terms, which usually stipulate that now they have to be in control. Ironically, instead of educating men (which I admit is an uphill struggle), instead of trying to make men better, they have made themselves worse. They have made themselves like men. I don't know what women hope to accomplish by imitating men, but is sure as hell isn't liberation.

A basic tenet of feminism was that women must be free to express and enjoy their natural sexuality. By adapting, as a defense mechanism, the sexual tactics of men, they have merely shifted the brutal yoke from masculine shoulders onto their own, and nobody is enjoying anything very much.

The androids haven't helped. My friend Robin Anne said that androids are Victorian at core. That's not quite correct. Victorians never openly discussed sex. Androids discuss sex fairly frequently. They discuss it in the most cold, clinical terms, without embarrassment and without the slightest respect for the mystery. Their sexual conversation has all the juice of a social sciences textbook. You could run a dozen androids through a Cuisinart and not get enough purple passion to moisten a crabshell.

Certainly I'm not the first to accuse the women's movement of having a withered little green apple for a sense of humor. Feminists retort, "With the inequities, exploitations, repressions, rapes, and batterings, what's there to laugh about?" A fair question. The answer is-just about everything.

Any one-transistor, inch-deep wimp can laugh when things are going smoothly. To laugh when things are rotten requires strength and character. That why Zen masters, Tantric saints and Yiddish boohos have always

regarded gallows humor as the highest expression of wisdom. Gallows humor is not simply the apex of enlightenment, it is a means of survival. Through humor, we can actually transform negative into positive.

Each and every one of us has a stake in feminism and therefore a right to administer to it with out laughter and our tears. Feminism is for men just as much as it is for women. Just as much. And while it's time to stop being intimidated by the fully-girls, we mustn't throw out the feminism with the feminismo. I don't mean to imply that feminism is a universal solution. There are no universal solutions. There are no group solutions. There are only individual solutions, individual liberations. Within its limitations, however, feminism can assist individuals in their growth toward a richer, freer, more tender reality.

Between men and women there are important differences. Finally, the differences are the more significant, for it is the balance of opposites, the yin yang polarity that holds the universe together. It is these differences in tension that make life possible. Unisex can make it impossible. The wimpy rockets of unisex are as deadly as H-bombs.

I don't know if my critic at the Paramount spoke for the majority of the Crabshell Alliance. I'd like to think that he did not. If he did, then that organization is contradicting itself in a most hypocritical and destructive way. On the one hand, the Alliance would be battling courageously the demons of nuclear power while on the other hand embracing the equally insidious devils of unisex. On the one hand, bravely pro-life, on the other, pusillanimously anti-life.

Nuclear power is one of the most sinister frauds ever perpetrated on the American people. Unisex is even more fraudulent, more sinister. By unisex, both biological and psychological existence can be zapped.

Rightwing America, before retiring at night, used to check under the bed to make sure Mao Tse-tung wasn't hiding there. Nowadays, liberals are looking under the bed for Hugh Hefner.

Some folks are so anxious to be victims that they go out searching for assassins. If a sexist doesn't come along, they take up a collection and send for one. Paranoia about

sexism has replaced paranoia about communism. The results are equally mean.

What is fascinating is that the excesses of anti-communism stemmed from a lack of sophistication, while conversely, the excesses of anti-eroticism stem from an extreme of sophistication. As feminine must be balanced by masculine, and vice versa, so sophistication must be checked by innocence. When sophistication is allowed to over-power innocence, the list of losses grows long. Vulnerability is lost; imagination, spontaneity, and naturalness are lost; lost, too, is the sense of wonder. The androids have carried sophistication into feminism the way flies carry disease into ambrosia.

According to Esther Harding, the trouble with twentieth-century society is that there has been "a shift in emphasis from the values symbolized by the moon to those represented by the sun." Traditional feminism is lunar through and through. Thanks to the androids, unisexuals, and ball-busters, feminismo is solarized.

It's ironic that the star of the Paramount anti-nuke romantic talent than Jesse in music today. For his suffered. Blasts by professional cynics almost caused him to abandon his career. He persisted in his high ideals, however, and his songs will be lighting the darkness long after disco has atrophied and punk rock is so much congealed goose grease in the ears of the ghouls.

Romanticism is not only out of fashion, it is under attack. From all quarters.

tainted sports. Now politics is zeroing in on sex.

The true radicals today are members neither of the Crabshell Alliance nor the George Jackson Brigade. Today's radicals are romantics. In 1978, the romantic is the outlaw.

Well, this is one Bozo who's honored to be on the side of romanticism. I popped out of the womb by candlelight and when I utter my last gasp it will be scented with champagne.

And I suspect that deep in the ancient quarters of their brains, most people are romantically inclined. Somewhere inside every android there are tiny cells itching to frolic by moonglow. Most people are sweethearts when you can get them out of their egos and into their selves. Even Mr. Crabshell could be giggling at the Nookie Nebula if he could just muster the courage to spurn group-think and start thinking for himself.

Indeed, if the human spirit triumphs over androidism, there may come a time when people again view life as a spiderweb of mysteries to be celebrated rather than as a rat nest of problems to be solved.

Meanwhile, I pledge allegiance to the rose and the clam. I kiss the porpoise and the child. I maintain a great hairy enthusiasm for the affection of free women. And if that provokes others to call me sexist, please be my guest. So long as they remain faithful to the Mysterious Mother, the wild heart, and the moon, romantics needn't give a warm squirt of Perrier water what they are called.

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racist?